

April 27, 2001

## FACT SHEET

### NOTICE OF DENIAL OF A PETITION TO REMOVE METHANOL FROM THE CLEAN AIR ACT LIST OF HAZARDOUS AIR POLLUTANTS

#### TODAY'S ACTION

- ! The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is denying a petition to remove methanol from the list of toxic air pollutants the Clean Air Act requires the Agency to regulate.
- ! EPA made today's decision after an extensive review of the petition, public comments and additional information about methanol.
- ! Methanol is a flammable, colorless, volatile liquid that is used as a solvent in various adhesives, cleaners and inks. Methanol is released as a by-product from wood pulping; biomass, refuse and plastics combustion; and petroleum, charcoal and plastics manufacturing. Methanol also is emitted naturally from some vegetation, microorganisms and insects, and is produced when organic wastes biodegrade.
- ! The American Forest & Paper Association (AF&PA) submitted a petition in March 1996 requesting that the EPA remove methanol from the Clean Air Act list of air toxics. The AF&PA submitted several supplements to the petition between March 1997 to February 1999 to address various deficiencies identified by EPA reviewers.
- ! In 1999, EPA concluded that the petition contained sufficient information to be considered complete. A Federal Register notice announcing the receipt of the completed petition and opening the petition to public comment was published July 19, 1999.
- ! Based on its extensive review, EPA was not able to conclude that methanol emissions do not pose a risk to human health. Therefore, EPA is denying the petition and methanol will remain on the list of air toxics for regulation.

#### BACKGROUND

- ! The Clean Air Act requires EPA to regulate nearly 200 compounds that are listed as air toxics, also known as hazardous air pollutants. Air toxics are those pollutants known, or suspected, to potentially cause cancer and other human health problems.
- ! The law allows EPA to consider petitions to modify the list, by adding or deleting substances.
- ! Petitioners seeking to delete a substance must demonstrate that there are adequate data to

determine that emissions, outdoor concentrations, bioaccumulation, or atmospheric deposition of the substance may not reasonably be anticipated to damage human health or the environment.

- ! Once EPA receives a “delisting” petition, it conducts two reviews: a completeness review to determine whether there is sufficient information on which to base a decision, and a technical review to evaluate the merits of the petition.
- ! After a comprehensive technical review (of information contained in the petition, received from the public, and other relevant data) to determine whether the petition satisfies the requirements of the law, EPA decides whether to propose removing the substance from the air toxics lists or issue a notice of denial.
- ! Only one substance, Caprolactam, has been removed from the list to date (1995).

#### **FOR MORE INFORMATION**

- ! Copies of the original petition and its supporting information are available for public inspection and copying at the following address; U.S. EPA, Air and Radiation Docket and Information Center (6102), 401 M Street, SW, Washington, DC 20460. The docket is located at the above address in Room M-1500, Waterside Mall (ground floor). The docket number is A-99-23.
- ! To download the Federal Register notice from EPA’s web site on the World Wide Web, go to “Recent Actions: at <http://www.epa.gov/ttn/oarpg>. For technical questions, contact Chuck French at EPA’s Office of Air Quality Planning & Standards at phone number (919) 541-0467, or email address: french.chuck@epa.gov.